

Message Text

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ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 EA-10 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01

INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15

ICA-11 HA-05 AID-05 /084 W

-----083083 061407Z /53

R 060943Z JUN 78

FM AMEMBASSY BANJUL

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5617

INFO AMEMBASSY DAKAR POUCH

AMEMBASSY SEOUL

C O N F I D E N T I A L BANJUL 0903

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PGOV GA KN KS

SUBJECT: STUDENT UNREST PERHAPS SPARKED BY NORTH KOREANS

1. STUDENT UNREST BROKE OUT AT YUNDUM TEACHER TRAINING COLLEGE (THE GAMBIA'S ONLY INSTITUTE OF HIGHER LEARNING) ON MAY 23. EMBASSY IS STILL ATTEMPTING TO LEARN EXACTLY WHAT HAPPENED, BUT EVIDENTLY CONFRONTATION DEVELOPED BETWEEN STUDENTS AND STAFF, AFTER WHICH PRINCIPAL (A BRITISH NATIONAL) SUSPENDED SCHOOL. LARGE GROUP OF STUDENTS MARCHED IN BANJUL MAY 26, CARRYING BANNERS ASKING FOR VARIOUS REFORMS, INCLUDING FACULTY CHANGES, BETTER LIVING CONDITIONS, LARGER LIBRARY, ETC. SOME BANNERS AND GRAFITTI SCRIBBLED AT SCHOOL HAD RACIAL OVERTONES. MANY STUDENTS WERE DETAINED BY POLICE AND LATER RELEASED. ENTIRE EPISODE HAS BEEN NON-VIOLENT, AND POLICE ACTION NOTABLY RESTRAINED.

2. COMMISSION OF INQUIRY, INCLUDING PRINCIPAL AND CHIEF EDUCATION OFFICER, CONVENED MAY 29-30 TO QUESTION STUDENTS AND INVESTIGATE CHARGES. STUDENTS REFUSED TO ACCEPT COMMISSION FINDINGS, THEREFORE PRINCIPAL SENT HOME FIRST AND SECOND YEAR STUDENTS AS OF MAY 31. THIRD YEAR STUDENTS, NOW PRACTICE TEACHING, WILL PRESUMABLY CONTINUE ON UNTIL GRADUATION IN JULY.

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3. THERE ARE INDICATIONS THAT STUDENT ACTION MAY HAVE BEEN SPARKED BY NORTH KOREAN FILM SHOW HELD AT YUNDUM NIGHT OF MAY 22. NO FACULTY WERE PRESENT TO VIEW FILM(S) WHICH WERE SHOWN BY DPRK DIPLOMAT TO STUDENT GROUP ON CAMPUS. ALLEGEDLY, FILM(S) WERE BLATANTLY ANTI-AMERICAN.

4. CHARGE DISCUSSED MATTER WITH GOTG SECRETARY GENERAL CHRIST-

ENSEN MAY 31. LATTER SAID THAT POLICE ARE INVESTIGATING WHAT TRANSPIRED AT NORTH KOREAN FILM SHOW. NORTH KOREANS WILL BE TOLD THAT ANY FILMS THEY WISH TO SHOW OUTSIDE EMBASSY PREMISES WILL HAVE TO BE PREVIEWED BY MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS REPRESENTATIVE. CHARGE SAID THAT HE WOULD HAVE TO PROTEST IF INDEED IT DEVELOPS THAT NORTH KOREANS ARE SHOWING ANTI-AMERICAN FILMS TO GAMBIA AUDIENCES. BOTH AGREED THAT INCIDENT DESERVES THOROUGH FOLLOW-UP.

5. AT PRESENT IT APPEARS THAT BRITISH PRINCIPAL MAY HAVE OVER-REACTED TO STUDENT COMPLAINTS. NO VIOLENCE WAS USED AND MANY OF CHARGES SEEM DESERVING OF CONSIDERATION. IN OCTOBER 1977 THE GAMBIA'S ONLY OTHER BOARDING ESTABLISHMENT, ARMITAGE HIGH SCHOOL, 180 MILES UP RIVER, WAS CLOSED FOR THREE MONTHS FOLLOWING TWO DAYS OF ANARCHY AND VIOLENCE WHICH CAUSED SOME MINOR INJURIES AND EXTENSIVE PROPERTY DAMAGE. PRINCIPAL MAY HAVE HAD ARMITAGE EXAMPLE IN MIND WHEN HE DECIDED TO SEND STUDENTS HOME. ACTION WILL BE SERIOUS SET BACK TO EDUCATION ESTABLISHMENT AS MANY TEACHERS-IN-TRAINING MAY NOW BE PERMANENTLY LOST TO SYSTEM. WYGANT

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: PROPAGANDA, STUDENT DEMONSTRATIONS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 06 jun 1978
Decaption Date: 01 jan 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978BANJUL00903
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780236-0174
Format: TEL
From: BANJUL
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t19780694/aaaadchv.tel
Line Count: 82
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 6c226e91-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION AF
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 28 apr 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 2483074
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: STUDENT UNREST PERHAPS SPARKED BY NORTH KOREANS
TAGS: PGOV, GA, KN, KS
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odhc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/6c226e91-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014